

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 002533

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/21/2015

TAGS: [SENV](#) [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#) [ENVIRONMENT](#) [SCIENCE](#) [AND](#) [TECHNOLOGY](#) [GAZA](#) [DISENGAGEMENT](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN COOPERATION ON WATER ISSUES
AND GAZA DISENGAGEMENT AGREED TO AT TRILATERAL WATER TALKS

REF: 04 TEL AVIV 6500

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Gene A. Cretz, reasons 1.4 b and d.

This is a joint Embassy Tel Aviv - Consulate General
Jerusalem message.

1. (C) Summary: At Trilateral Water Talks in Tel Aviv April 7 Israeli and Palestinian water officials agreed to coordinate on water-related aspects of Gaza disengagement. Israeli Water Commissioner, Shimon Tal, and Palestinian Water Authority Chairman, Fadel Ka'wash, agreed to begin working on a proposal to address the transfer of settlement water assets before the end of April and to produce a draft in May. The Trilateral Water Working Group will meet in June to review progress. The parties also agreed to coordinate planning for the Bethlehem waste water treatment plant and to discuss water issues related to the Kedumim garbage dump and Wadi Gaza. They will report back to the U.S. on joint planning for water supplies for the northern West Bank and work together on a donor coordination meeting on wastewater treatment projects. Participants honored the memory of Nabil Sharif, the Palestinian Water Authority Chairman who passed away after the last Trilateral meeting. End summary.

Collegial Atmosphere at Water Talks

2. (C) On April 7, the U.S.-Israeli-Palestinian Trilateral Water Working Group, chaired by NEA Senior S&T Advisor Charles Lawson, gathered at the USAID offices in Tel Aviv, four months after the last session (reftel). Deputy Chief of Mission Cretz led the group in a moment of silence to honor the memory of former Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) Chairman Nabil Sharif, who passed away in February. The DCM asked the group to support Fadel Ka'wash, the new PWA Chairman. Ka'wash, in turn, introduced Rebhy El-Sheikh as the new PWA Deputy for Gaza. The talks were held in a collegial and productive atmosphere, and the group reached agreement in several key areas.

Bilateral Cooperation Very Active

3. (C) Reports from the Joint Water Committee (JWC) and the Joint Technical Committee (JTC) illustrated the very active cooperation taking place on water supplies despite the increasing urgency to address the needs of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. The Israeli water company Mekorot increased supplies to the West Bank by 3.5 million cubic meters (MCM) over the previous year. In the JTC, the two sides are working through a list of 78 projects proposed by the PWA. Areas of particular concern included the need for sewage treatment projects and the deteriorating condition of the aquifer under the Gaza Strip.

Gaza Disengagement and Water

4. (C) The main topic of discussion was the need to address the water-related issues concerning Israel's disengagement from Gaza. The Israeli Water Commission and the PWA agreed to meet before the end of April to exchange information on water assets and develop a plan to transfer infrastructure and coordinate water supply arrangements. They also agreed to have a written plan ready in May. The Trilateral group will meet again in June to review the preliminary draft.

Other Key Decisions

5. (C) The parties also agreed to coordinate with USAID on planning for a Bethlehem waste water treatment plant and a related master plan. They agreed to review PWA concerns about Israeli wastewater running into the Wadi Gaza in either the JWC or JTC, and to address the impact on water supplies of the Israeli Kedumim garbage dump on the West Bank in the JTC. Both parties agreed to keep the U.S. side informed of their discussions on those two issues. The PWA and the JWC will invite donors to a coordination meeting on wastewater treatment projects, with the U.S. side providing technical support.

Successful Meeting, Many Tasks Ahead

6. (C) Comment: This was the most productive meeting of the Trilateral Water Working Group in several years, reflecting the more positive political situation. Embassy, Consulate General and USAID officials will follow up with both the

Israeli and Palestinian water officials to ensure that agreed planning for Gaza disengagement moves forward. Donor coordination on sewage and wastewater treatment will be an ongoing pressing concern, and the successful execution of sewage projects in Gaza will be key to relieving pressure on its overused Coastal Aquifer. End comment.

Visit Embassy Tel Aviv's Classified Website:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/telaviv>
You can also access this site through the State Department's
Classified SIPRNET website.

CRETZ